

DIVINE SURPRISES**NO. 1538****A SERMON****DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 16, 1880,****BY C. H. SPURGEON,****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down,
the mountains flowed down at Your presence.”*

Isaiah 64:3.

THE people of God were in a very sad state when this chapter described them. Isaiah pictures them as brought into the lowest degree of fear and sorrow. He pleads with God to return to His chosen people and restore their former peace and prosperity. He makes use of the past as an argument for the future and recites the wonderful acts of God in days gone by as an encouragement to expect that He would do the like again. If it were not that God is unchangeable, no inference could be drawn from His past behavior toward us, but inasmuch as He is immutably the same, yesterday, today, and forever, we may safely infer that what He has done He will do again. They say that history repeats itself. It were more true to say that God abides the same, that His ways are everlasting, and His mercy endures forever. Therefore it is good and sound pleading to say, “You have done this and that, therefore again make bare Your arm and once more let Your people rejoice in Your faithfulness and Your power.”

While we may all do this on behalf of the church of God and find a rich store of arguments in her past history, we may also do it for ourselves. Some of us are now getting into years and we have known the Savior for thirty years or more. We ought to be well supplied with reasons for trusting Him and I am sure we are so. Let us look back on the past and remember how He has forgiven our transgressions, how He has recovered our backslidings, how He has relieved our necessities, how He has cheered our despondencies, and strengthened our weaknesses. He that is our God is still the God of salvation and He will continue still to bless us, even to the end. Because the Lord is my shepherd and now makes me to lie down in green pastures, therefore I conclude that, “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” At the back of whatever I shall have to say this morning will lie this grand principle—that as the past is, so we may expect the future to be in reference to God’s dealings with us.

Let us come more closely to our point. From the text and from its connection, I gather, first, that *the presence of God is the one hope of His people*. In this text the prophet speaks of God’s doing terrible things when He came down among His people. We shall next notice that *the presence of God creates surprises*. He did “things which we looked not for.” We shall observe, thirdly, that *the presence of God achieves wonders*, “the mountains flowed down at Your presence.” And then, lastly, we shall come back to where we started and reflect that *we may expect the same results from the divine presence* if we are privileged to enjoy it.

I. First let us meditate upon the fact that **THE DIVINE PRESENCE IS THE ONE HOPE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD**. The prophet shows that he believed this, for he commences the chapter by a most ardent cry to God that He would come into the midst of His people, “Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down.” A little before this, (in the fifteenth verse of the previous chapter), he had prayed, “Look down from heaven.” But it is the characteristic of true prayer that it grows as it proceeds. He begins by asking God to look down, but he gathers intensity of desire and confidence of faith and here he cries, “Come down.” So eager is Isaiah that God should come and come at once, that he speaks to Him as though addressing a warrior who lingered in his tent while a battle was raging, who would be so eager to rush to the help of his friends that he would not stay to remove the canvas or to lift the curtain, but would rend a way for himself through the canopy to come at once to the deliverance of those who called him to the rescue. “Oh that You would rend the heavens.” Stay not, Great God, to pass through the gate of pearl, but rend Your heavens. Let the blue firmament be torn in two and do You de-

scend from heaven upon rushing mighty winds for the help of Your people. When our divine Lord opened the way by which God could come to us poor guilty men, He did not lift the curtain nor fold it up, but the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom and so the door was left wide open forever; for none can ever fix the veil in its place again. It was through the open heavens that Christ went in where He now stands to plead for us and by that open heaven the sacred Spirit descended to rest upon the Church. The impetuous character of the simile here used shows that the prophet looked upon the divine visitation as the one thing needful for Israel. O Lord, we do not ask You to cause the earth to bring forth plentifully, or to make our wealth increase, or to make the kings of the earth favorable to Your cause, but come Yourself to bless Your people and they will need no more. Oh that You would come down. Even so, come quickly. Is not this the prayer of every true heart here that knows the need of the Church and the need of the age? We do not so much require more ministers or more eloquent teachers, but more of the sacred presence. We do not want wealth in the church, or magnificent buildings, or ornate services, but we crave above all things that the living God will refresh His people. If the Lord were in the midst of us, if the shout of a king were heard in our camps, then would our armies march to the victory and our foes would be defeated.

The desire of the prophet in the present instance is abundantly justified by the history of God's people in all times, for when the tribes were in Egypt, what could set them free from the iron bondage? What but the presence of God? The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows." Then the Lord came down to deliver them and you know with what signs and wonders He plagued the proud Egyptian oppressor. Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah?" but he soon received his answer when the waters were turned into blood and the dust into lice; when the cattle died of disease and every green thing in the land was blasted with lightning or eaten with locusts. Pharaoh and his people learned that when God is in the midst of His oppressed and down-trodden people they are "like an hearth of fire among the wood and like a torch of fire in a sheaf." God's presence in Israel with Moses and Aaron brought them out "with a high hand and with an outstretched arm." When they started on that memorable night, after eating the Passover, what was it that made the march of Israel so grand an event in history? Did not Jehovah lead the way? When they came to the borders of the Red Sea with the rocks on either side and the angry host pursuing them, what was their defense but that God looked out from the fiery, cloudy pillar and while His smile lit up the midnight of His people and made it bright as day, He looked forth from the cloudy side and troubled the Egyptians and took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them heavily? It was God's presence that quickened the feet of Miriam and Israel's daughters on the other side of the sea, when they struck their timbrels and cried, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." God's presence did it all. He who amid their thick array His kingly dwelling made was the glory of their strength, the banner of their joy.

So was it when their marching was through the lone wilderness. What made Israel thrive upon barren sand? What made the nation drink plenteously from the rock? It was the presence of God that made the earth a watered sod, the flint a gushing rill. The tabernacle stood in their midst and the presence of God was symbolized there by a blaze of glory between the cherubim and this it was that made Israel the chief among the nations. The whole of the story of Israel proves the same truth. God's presence was Israel's glory. When they grieved Him and provoked Him, then the feeblest of the nations round about them tyrannized over them. They were an insignificant and defenseless nation of themselves, but when God shone upon them, they were great among the nations and the scepter of Israel was stretched from sea to sea. "God with us," when written on Israel's banner, secured them honor and conquest, but without God they could do nothing.

Dear friends, this truth which is thus borne out in the history of God's ancient people is certainly true with us. The favor of God is the hope of all His people. First, we see this in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, when did you and I ever obtain comfort or receive hope of acceptance until we saw God with us in our flesh? The world would have perished if God had not come down to it in the person of His dear Son. At Bethlehem the wondrous mystery was seen. The Godhead veiled beneath the form of a babe. This was the birth of hope.

So, too, when the Lord Jesus comes to any one of us by His Spirit, our hope begins. We see Him as our Immanuel and we are comforted. Dr. Watts most sweetly sings—

*“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel’s face appears,
My hope, my joy begins.
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.”*

God saves us by coming to us in Christ with an atonement in His hands wherewith to put away our sin.

Yes, and our hope of the perfection of our salvation still lies in the coming of Christ to us. We expect that when He comes in the latter day, though our bodies may have seen corruption and the worms may have devoured them, yet in our flesh we shall see God. When Christ shall come a second time the Archangel’s trump shall sound and then shall we receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body for which we now hopefully await. Because He lives we shall live also and because He shall come to be revealed, we also shall be manifested. Our Lord’s first coming in our flesh has given us eternal salvation. His coming to us by His Spirit has worked in us a living faith and His second coming by-and-by is the grand object of our hope. That day and hour no man knows, for the Father keeps it in His own power, but the consummation of all our hopes is wrapped up in it and therefore do we cry, “Come quickly; even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.” So, you see, brethren, it is the presence of God with us in Christ which is the ground of all our hope.

Until our Lord’s glorious advent, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is our only dependence for success in all that we attempt. If we meet for prayer, it must be praying in the Holy Spirit, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought till He instructs us. It is hard praying to an absent God. The Lord’s presence is the life of a prayer meeting. If the Lord is not there to inspire the prayer, He is not there to hear the prayer. When we preach, it is poor testifying if we have not the Lord’s anointing resting upon us and His presence all around us. If the Spirit of God is not with the preacher, a silent tongue might be as efficient as the most eloquent speech. So is it with our missionary enterprise. It must be a failure unless the Lord is in it from first to last. Every missionary might fitly say, “If Your Spirit go not with me, carry me not up from here.” Vain will it be to organize societies, enlist subscribers, and enter upon actual effort, and to spend money and zeal thereon if the Lord is not there. “Without Me you can do nothing,” said our Lord of old and the same is true unto this day.

The presence of God is essential to each one of us if we are to be saved. It is well for the prodigal to arise and go to his father, but the saving moment comes when his father meets him. “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and ran and had compassion on him and fell upon his neck and kissed him.” There was the actual salvation. The lost sheep is not found till the Shepherd comes to it. God’s coming to a man convinces him of sin. He stands up for self-righteousness till the Holy Spirit constrains him to own the truth. Never did a stony heart turn itself to flesh or a blind eye remove its own darkness. God must come in infinite freeness of grace and work with boundless power of love, or the dead sinner will remain dead and the blinded mind will remain blind. Yes, and after the work is begun, the presence of God in the soul is needful for its continuance and progress. We never take a step towards God except with God. Even the faintest desire towards Him is breathed into us by His own Spirit; and as for the higher works of grace in the soul, they are evidently all of God, for the assurance of faith, the confidence of hope, and the consecration of love never were ascribed by their possessors to any source less than divine. Let a man try to serve God without God and he will fail. Sitting at Jesus’ feet is our proper posture. When He teaches, we have knowledge; all else is conceit. In His company we are happy and useful, but apart from Him we are miserable failures. Even in heaven itself the presence of God is the source of joy and perfection. Up yonder they need no candle, neither light of the sun, because the Lord God gives them light. If He were not among them it would be dark as death-shade. The blessed ones drink from the river of His pleasures; no other stream makes glad the city of God. Their life is His life. Their bliss is His own divine pleasure. They enter into Christ’s glory and they are filled with Christ’s joy. Is it not clear enough that our most essential need is the nearness of God to our souls? “My soul, wait only upon

God, for my expectation is from Him.” David’s petition shall be mine, “Draw nigh unto my soul and redeem it.” “It is good for me to draw near unto God.” O Lord, remember Your Word unto Your servant, “My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest.”

II. The second point I wish to bring before you is when the Lord comes, HIS PRESENCE CREATES GREAT SURPRISES, “When You did terrible things *which we looked not for*, You came down.”

It has always been so. Whenever God has come to men He has always surprised them. Even the most expectant among men have found their expectations far exceeded; while those who have been depressed and have prophesied dark things, have been altogether taken aback to see the goodness of the Lord. God came to Jacob’s house and his favorite son was sold for a slave—the Ishmaelites took him down into Egypt. “Ah,” said Jacob when he thought on this and his other trials, “all these things are against me.” He could not make out that there could be any good intended of the Lord when he cried, “Joseph is not and Simeon is not and you would take Benjamin away?” And yet God was doing great things for him which he looked not for; for Joseph was set upon the throne of Egypt that he might provide a refuge for his old father and his brethren in the days when there should be a famine over all the earth. Then would he say unto them, “Come down unto me, tarry not; you shall dwell in the land of Goshen and there will I nourish you.” God was doing for the trembling patriarch, “things which he looked not for.” I shall not stop to give instances in the history of God’s people. Often did they cry out, “You are the God that does wonders! Who is like unto You?” Do you think the Israelites when they stood by the Red Sea ever imagined they would walk through it dry-shod? When they stood on the burning sand did they expect to live under a vast sunshade all day long? Yet they did so, for the cloudy pillar screened them from the heat. Did they suppose that their camp would be lit up at night as never canvas city had been lighted before, with an illumination brighter than our electric lights can give to us? Yet the flaming column was a grand illumination to them. When they were hungering did they hope to gather angels’ bread fresh from the skies? When they were thirsty did they reckon upon a smitten rock yielding an abundant stream? When they were bitten by serpents did they expect that a brazen serpent would work their cure? When they came to the river did they look to see old Jordan retreat before the priests’ feet? When they compassed the city of Jericho did they hope to see the wall tumble down about the ears of its inhabitants because the tribes sounded rams’ horns and gave forth a shout? No, the history of Israel is a series of surprises and unexpected mercies. The Lord does great marvels and His people are filled with happy astonishment.

It has been even more so in the works of grace. See what God has done for us in matchless mercy. When He stood at the gates of Eden and talked with Adam, and cursed the ground for man’s sake, could any onlooking angel have imagined that in all this God intended to display the greatness of His mercy, so that where sin abounded grace should much more abound? Did any man, did any angel, did any seraph ever imagine that the Son of God would come down to be born into this rebel race? Did it ever enter into their conception that He would die, the just for the unjust, to bring men to God? Was it ever thought of that sinful man should be adopted into the divine family? Do you not think it a most amazing thing that sinful men should be born again and adopted into the family of God?—

*“Behold what wondrous grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God.”*

This was an honor that we looked not for. Moreover, God having made us to be His children did we ever look that He would make us His heirs? Yet He says, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ.” Did it ever enter into man’s heart to conceive that the church should be married to Christ, wedded to Him in bands of everlasting love? Did it ever enter the dreams of any intelligent being that God would lift up man, poor, fallen man, to sit in the person of Christ next to Himself? Well did David cry, “What is man, that You are mindful of Him? and the son of man, that You visit him?” You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands. This is wonderful.

Brethren, though we think we know what God in grace is doing, I am sure we do not. We shall not know ourselves when we get to heaven and when we rise from the dead we shall say, “I believed in the resurrection of the dead, but this out-miracles all miracles.” When our Lord shall take us up into glory, how amazed we shall be! To talk about that glory now does ravish us, but to be in it, flooded with it,

filled with it, crowned with it—this will be overwhelming. Surely we shall need stronger frames and hearts more able to endure the weight of bliss than those which we now have. How is it that we continue to be surprised at what God does? I answer, first, because our largest conceptions of God fall short of the truth. The man who has, like Enoch, walked with Him for years, yet knows little of Him. Ah, my brother, you do not know the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of His wondrous liberality yet. God is infinite. We are as a tiny shell on the beach, we cannot hold the ocean, and therefore the measureless main must always be a marvel to us. We shall always be in a measure ignorant and as the unknown is gradually revealed it will take us aback with absolute astonishment. Besides, our experience of God is very brief. We have lived as yet only for a span or a hand's breadth. Even you old men of sixty or seventy years, what are you? Your life has gone like the winking of an eye. It is nothing as compared with the life of God. Therefore there must be in God's dealings a great deal yet to come of which poor, short-lived insects like ourselves can have no idea. Besides that, I am sorry to say our faith is shamefully weak and does not look for great things. We have never had such faith in God as He deserves at our hands. We have never believed Him for more than two pence, when we ought to have believed in Him for all the gold of Ophir. He is worthy of a trust boundless as the sea and we have scarcely relied upon Him beyond the mere drop in a bucket. By doing "exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or even think," the Lord puts us into an amazed state. It will always be so. Even in heaven we shall still be astonished, as the poet puts it—

*"Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day
And sing with rapture and surprise,
His lovingkindness in the skies."*

It is a most blessed thing it is so. I am so glad that God does those "things which we looked not for" because first, it keeps our life fresh and sweet, and puts us far from monotony and routine. You people who have no God must find life a threadbare tale; one week must be very like another and one year as another to you, but some of us can sing, "Still has my life new wonders seen."

Novels! I assure you that no novel can equal in interest the unvarnished facts of Christian experience, especially in the case of those who are much tried. Facts surpass fictions in their power to surprise. The makers of romances may rub their foreheads as long as they like, but they cannot invent stories at all comparable to those which happen to us in our ordinary lives. We do not get tired of living because there is something new every morning in the goodness of the Lord; fresh revelations are brought out by the trials we are called to endure.

Thus He increases our knowledge. When you and I enter upon a new trouble, we ought to fall on our knees and thank God that He is about to elevate us to a higher grace of discipleship. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions. When He puts me to greater pain, my Lord thinks a fit state to be introduced into an inner chamber. The Christian's experience is like that of the man who is conducted from an outer court into inner rooms, until he reaches the innermost of all. If God opens the first door of gracious knowledge and lets you in, you are a saved man as soon as you enter by faith, but there is another door and when you enter in there you are not only saved, but made useful in the saving of others. Yet there is another door and if God favors you by admitting you into the inner chamber you will be a happy man, mighty in prayer, and confident in hope. Another door stands within this hallowed chamber and if you can find the keyhole and use the key, you will enter into the secret hall of intimate fellowship with Christ. I do not know how many rooms there are, one within another in the place of heavenly wisdom, but this I know, that whenever the Lord is about to introduce His servants into a still more secret chamber where they shall be nearer to Himself, He generally sends them a new trial to test them and to discover whether they can bear a fresh installment of His revelations of love. Bless the Lord for trials, for they prove the Lord's faithfulness and endear Him to our hearts. He will never lead us into a labyrinth without giving us the clue. Growing trials in God's hands mean growing grace—you were once in a little canoe and you might not leave the tiny stream, but when years had gone by you rowed in a boat upon the river, though you dared not leave the shore. Now the Lord has built you a larger vessel and you make coasting voyages upon the sea, but He does not mean you always to be a mere coaster, carrying a few coals about, He intends you to cross the seas, to brave the ocean, and navigate the globe. As you are

gradually fitted for longer voyages, so will you encounter rougher storms and so will you see more of the works of the Lord and of His wonders in the deep.

Surprising mercies tend to awaken our gratitude. Have we not marveled at the goodness of the Lord? “Bless the Lord,” we have said, “I never dreamed of such love. This way out of my difficulties is excellent, but it is one which I could not have foreseen. I am glad I was brought into straits that I might see how my Lord could bring me out of them.” I almost wish I had been with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. It must have been a fine thing to walk unhurt among those glowing coals and to come out, and be able to say of all your garments, to your children and your children’s children, “These have passed through the fire. See the socks and the hat which I wore amid the flames, there is not a smell of fire upon them.” What a wardrobe to pass on to your children’s children, to show what the Lord has done! Some of us can do this spiritually, for our hearts are stored with grateful memories.

How much God is glorified by His people when He does things they looked not for. Their neighbors are surprised. As they tell the tale even unbelievers are struck with it and strangers join to say, “The Lord is good to His people and His mercy endures forever.”

Dear friends, I know that some of you can tell of instances in which the presence of God has worked great surprises for you and I can join you in doing so. If you have had rich experiences be sure to tell them to others. Perhaps you remember that a fortnight ago, on Sunday morning, I preached of Paul’s deep experience [#1536—Sentence of Death, the Death of Self-Trust] and I said that the experiences of the saints were a treasure, of which they were the trustees, for the benefit of others. A well-known and beloved brother in Christ was here that morning—I refer to Mr. W. Haslam, a clergyman of the church of England—and he so fully agreed with the remark that he carried it out by sending me a book in which he has written out the story of the first twenty years of his ministry. I have much enjoyed the reading of the narrative and to carry out the principle, I will now give you in brief the story of Mr. Haslam’s conversion as an instance of “things which we looked not for.” You have all heard of Billy Bray, the Cornish Methodist who was so mighty in prayer. There was a certain hill that Billy was accustomed to pass, for which he prayed with all his might, till he believed that his heavenly Father had given him that mountain, so that all the souls that lived on it should be saved. He visited all the houses and obtained a blessing for the inhabitants, but as there were only three houses on the hill, he prayed in his own simple way that more might be built. It seemed an odd prayer and the neighbors did not think it a wise one, but nevertheless it was fulfilled.

Sometime later, when he visited that place, he found that Mr. Haslam had built a church and schools there and his joy was great until he entered the church. At the sight of the surprised choir and the Ritualistic performance, poor Bray was greatly downcast and said that it was nothing but an “old Roman Church.” Billy went home and set himself to praying again for that hill, but the fact was quite unknown to those who were the objects of his petitions. Soon the Lord hearkened to the cry of His servant and it came to pass that the Lord visited Mr. Haslam. His gardener fell sick and in the time of his illness his churchmanship failed to comfort him. A Methodist brother visited him and was the means of his conversion. When the man told Mr. Haslam that he was converted, he was very grieved and disappointed; he felt that he could never make Cornish men into Churchmen; they were confirmed schismatics. His favorite and most promising Churchman, a Mr. Aitken, had become a Dissenter and was actually praying that his master might become the same. What was to be done? Mr. Haslam had occasion to visit Mr. Aitken and told him about the sad defection of the gardener. “Why,” said Mr. Aitken, “you are not converted yourself. I am sure of it or you would not have come here to complain of your gardener.”

Conviction came into Haslam’s heart, his former hopes vanished, and in sadness he sought the Lord. Mr. Aitken said, “The best thing you can do is to shut the church up and tell your people you will never preach again till you are converted.” He could not do that, but on the next Sunday morning he went, ill and sad, to read the prayers, determined to send the people home as soon as they were finished. Instead of that, his eye lighted on the text, “What think you of Christ?” and he thought he would make a few observations upon that question before dismissing the congregation. For the rest, I will quote his own words, lest I should seem to color the incident by telling it in my own language, “As I went on to explain the passage, I saw that the Pharisees and scribes did not know that Christ was the Son of God, or that He was come to save them. They were looking for a king, the son of David, to reign over them as they were.

Something was telling me, all the time, ‘You are no better than the Pharisees yourself—you do not believe that He is the Son of God and that He is come to save you any more than they did.’ I do not remember all I said, but I felt a wonderful light and joy coming into my soul and I was beginning to see what the Pharisees did not. Whether it was something in my words, or my manner, or my look, I know not, but all of a sudden a local preacher, who happened to be in the congregation, stood up and putting up his arms, shouted out in Cornish manner, ‘The parson is converted! The parson is converted! Hallelujah!’ and in another moment his voice was lost in the shouts and praises of three or four hundred of the congregation. Instead of rebuking this extraordinary ‘brawling,’ as I would have done in a former time, I joined in the outburst of praise, and to make it more orderly, I gave out the Doxology—‘Praise God, from whom all blessings flow’—and the people sang it with heart and voice over and over again. When this subsided, I found at least twenty people crying for mercy, whose voices had not been heard in the excitement and noise of thanksgiving. They all professed to find peace and joy in believing. Amongst this number there were three from my own house; and we returned home praising God.”

This is a memorable illustration of the statement that when God comes down among a people He does things we looked not for. You may hope that the divine Spirit will still display His power over the most unlikely persons to the glory of His grace. He can save the most obstinate and bring opposers to the feet of Jesus. Plead with Him to do so.

III. Thirdly, THE PRESENCE OF GOD DISSOLVES DIFFICULTIES. I would bring you back to the text again, for perhaps you are beginning to forget it. “When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your presence.” This is a blessed sentence, “The mountains flowed down at Your presence.” Israel had enemies which were strong and powerful, nations and kings towered above them like great mountains, but whenever God came to help them, the kingdoms dissolved, the people were conquered, and the mountains and hills were laid low. At this present time great systems of error oppose the gospel of Jesus Christ. I need not mention them, for they are before us and seem to rise like giant Alps, overtopping our faith. Blessed be God, the church only needs the divine presence in the midst of her and all the systems of error will flow down at His feet like glaciers which dissolve in the summer’s sun. Perhaps you have seen a volcano when a stream of lava has been pouring down its side and if so you have had the metaphor of the text before your eye. God does but touch it and the mountain melts and flows away. So will it be with infidelity and superstition, Rationalism and Ritualism, and every form of wrong. If the Holy Spirit clothes the church with power by His presence, the powers of evil will not maintain themselves for an hour, the fire of sacred truth and heavenly life will utterly dissolve them. Many hearts are hard as granite. You may pray for them, talk to them, preach to them, but all in vain. What is required is the presence of God and then hearts of stone are turned to flesh, dead souls feel the beating of spiritual life, and corruption is overcome by resurrection power. Do not be afraid, brother. No heart can stand out against the grace of God when it comes in all its power. Do not despair in reference to your prodigal boy. Keep on praying and he will yet come to the house of God with you and you will sing together the praises of redeeming love. Despair of no one so long as you have a heart to pray.

Within our own selves also we may see mountains of difficulty, but if we go to Christ and so obtain God’s help, every mountain shall sink and every rock melt—

*“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by Your mercy, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”*

There is nothing in you, there is nothing round about you, there is nothing on earth, there is nothing in hell that can stand against you if you have God on your side, and you have God on your side when you put your trust in Jesus Christ. Between here and the eternal glories of heaven nothing shall ever stand against you if you do but trust in Jesus. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.

IV. Lastly, WE MAY EXPECT TO SEE THE SAME RESULTS FROM THE DIVINE PRESENCE TODAY and tomorrow, and as long as we live. God is the same. “Are You not He that has cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?” He is the same conquering Lord. The ages may have degenerated, but God

has not degenerated. Do not say that the truth has lost its power. Its power always lies in God and God is almighty still. He can work miracles today if He pleases. He could divide the Atlantic as easily as He did the Red Sea. “With God all things *are* possible,” not “were,” but, “*are*” still.

As to spiritual wonders, people think that Pentecost was with us once, but never can return; but Pentecost was only the Feast of First Fruits and first fruits predict the harvest. God will do greater things in the latter days than He did at Jerusalem at Pentecost. He says to us, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” We do not believe in Him. “If the Son of Man come, shall He find faith on the earth?” There is such a microscopic quantity of it that no eyes but His, which are like a flame of fire, could spy it out. Yet, I say, God is the same and as worthy to be trusted. And, brethren, we are the same. “No,” you say, “we are not, we are not such good men as those who lived in the olden times.” I answer that they had the same passions and infirmities as we have now. There was not a morsel of good in the apostles, martyrs, and confessors but what God put there. One earthen vessel is of the same clay as another and the same God may put the same treasure into one as well as into another. He can bless you and me as He did Peter, James, and John. Human nature is human nature still, both in its degradation and in its possibilities. God can make as much of you, my dear sister, as ever He did of Dorcas, or Mary, or Lydia; and He can make as much of you, my brother, as ever He did of any of the worthies of past times, if you will but trust Him. This feeble arm could slay a thousand men, or pluck up the gates of Gaza, or kill a lion, or pull down a temple upon the Philistines, if God chose to use it as He did Samson’s. The Lord has His own choice of instruments and He can make any instrument fit for His use if He pleases to do so.

Brethren, the promises are the same. “Oh,” you ask, “how is that? Are not some of them out of date?” No, the covenant is made up of abiding promises, suitable for all ages and all of them are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. We have the sure mercies of David. They stand fast forever and ever.

Mark you, there are things to be done yet by God which will astonish us beyond measure. We shall cry out against ourselves for our drooping and desponding thoughts, for by-and-by, perhaps before some of us see death, we shall behold greater things than our fathers saw and shall clap our hands for very joy. Read the chapter which follows our text and see what God is going to do. “I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name.” Heathens are to be saved, far off lands will soon be called. Watch for it, work for it, pray for it. Israel is also to be gathered, “I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob and out of Judah an inheritor of My mountains: and My elect shall inherit it and My servants shall dwell there.” O blessed hour, when the Jew shall worship the Christ whom he crucified! That is not all. There is coming yet—who knows how soon?—a new creation. “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy.” There will come a time in which the shortening of life after the deluge shall be remedied. “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old. As the days of a tree are the days of My people and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” Yes and there comes a time of universal peace. “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says the Lord.” Verily, verily, I say unto you, this text is true. When God shall do terrible things which we looked not for, He shall come down among us and the mountains shall flow at His presence. Amen and amen.

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